AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (original): An image forming method for expressing gradations in each of unit blocks, being configured by a plurality of dots, on a basis of an input color image data, wherein

an image recording for one color is performed in such a way that unit blocks which are adjacent to each other in a main scanning direction of the image recording are provided with gradation characteristics in different matrix arrangements by switching a front portion and a rear portion which are divided at an intermediate position in a sub-scanning direction.

2. (original): An image forming method according to claim 1, wherein each dot in the unit blocks is recorded at a size corresponding to given gradation.

3. (original): An image forming method for expressing gradations in each of unit blocks, being configured by a plurality of dots, on a basis of an input color image data, wherein

an image recording for one color is performed in such a way that unit blocks which are adjacent to each other in a main scanning direction of the image recording are provided with gradation characteristics in different matrix arrangements by switching a first front portion and a first rear portion which are divided at an intermediate position in a sub-scanning direction in a matrix, while in an arrangement of unit blocks which are adjacent to each other in the sub-scanning direction are shifted by one half of one block of the matrix in the main scanning direction, and

for other colors, unit blocks which are adjacent to each other in the sub-scanning

direction of image recording are provided with gradation characteristics in different matrix

arrangements by switching a second front portion and a second rear portion which are divided at

an intermediate position in a main scanning direction in the matrix.

4. (original): An image forming method according to claim 3, wherein each dot in the

unit blocks is a recording dot having a size defined by a given gradation which is set as a part of

a corresponding unit block on the basis of the color image data.

5. (original): An image forming method according to claim 3, wherein said one color is

black color.

6. (new): An image forming method according to claim 1, wherein the matrix

arrangements are configured by unit blocks having same vertical and lateral lengths, but different

numbers of dots in the sub-scanning direction, depending on a resolution of the sub-scanning

direction.

7. (new): An image forming method according to claim 3, wherein the matrix

arrangements are configured by unit blocks having same vertical and lateral lengths, but different

numbers of dots in the sub-scanning direction, depending on a resolution of the sub-scanning

direction.

8. (new): An image forming method according to claim 1, wherein resolution in the

main scanning direction is 600 dpi and in the sub-scanning direction is 1200 dpi for black, 900

dpi for cyan, and 600 dpi for magenta and yellow.

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9. (new): An image forming method according to claim 3, wherein resolution in the main scanning direction is 600 dpi and in the sub-scanning direction is 1200 dpi for black, 900 dpi for cyan, and 600 dpi for magenta and yellow.

10. (new): An image forming method according to claim 1, wherein the front portion and the rear portion are switched by interchanging matrix data with each other.

11. (new): An image forming method according to claim 3, wherein the front portion and the rear portion are switched by interchanging matrix data with each other.

12. (new): An image forming method for expressing gradations in each of unit blocks, being configured by a plurality of dots, on a basis of an input color image data, wherein

an image recording for color is performed in such a way that unit blocks which are immediately adjacent to each other in a scanning direction of the image recording are provided with gradation characteristics in different matrix arrangements by switching a front portion and a rear portion of the adjacent matrices, said front and rear portions being less than a full unit block of data.

13. (new): An image forming method for expressing gradations in each of unit blocks, being configured by a plurality of dots, on a basis of an input color image data, wherein

an image recording for one color is performed in such a way that unit blocks which are immediately adjacent to each other in a first scanning direction of the image recording are provided with gradation characteristics in different matrix arrangements by switching a first front portion and a first rear portion of the adjacent matrices, said first front and first rear portions being less than a full unit block of data, while in an arrangement of unit blocks which are immediately adjacent to each other in a second scanning direction of the image recording the

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adjacent matrices are shifted by one half of one unit block of the matrix in the first scanning

direction, and

for other colors, adjacent unit blocks are provided with gradation characteristics in

different matrix arrangements by switching a second front portion and a second rear portion of

the adjacent matrices, said second front and second rear portions being less than a full unit block

of data.

14. (new): An image forming method according to claim 12, wherein the front portion

and the rear portion are switched by interchanging matrix data with each other.

15. (new): An image forming method according to claim 13, wherein the first front

portion and the first rear portion are switched by interchanging matrix data with each other and

the second front portion and the second rear portion are switched by interchanging matrix data

with each other.